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061722Z Feb 06

UNCLAS ROME 000347

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E.O. 12958: N/A

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SUBJECT: ITALY WILL PUSH FOR ACTION ON CARICC PROJECT

REF: STATE 15709

1. (SBU) Poloff took advantage of Ref demarche to approach Enrico Valvo of the MFA's Counterterrorism Policy Unit (which also covers counternarcotics issues) and gauge Italian sentiment ahead of the Feb. 7-9 meeting. Valvo said Italy fully agrees with USG goals for the CARICC meeting. The GOI believes in a regional approach to combat narcotics trafficking, and Central Asia is of particular interest to the GOI because much of the heroin found in Italy originates in that region. Moreover, Italy is part of the Dublin Group (where Italy serves as regional president for Central Asia) and is contributing about USD 500,000 to the CARICC project.

2. (SBU) Valvo said that Italy's ambassador in Tashkent, Angelo Persiani, will represent the GOI at the CARICC meeting. The GOI shares USG anxiety to get the CARICC participants to make a decision on a venue for the center and begin making it operational. Amb. Persiani will have instructions to join consensus on Almaty as the most appropriate location, consistent with the UNODC consultant's recommendation. Valvo noted, however, that Italy would not raise the prospect of withholding funding for the project if a decision on the venue is not achieved during the meeting.

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